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ABSTRACT

Focusing on student experience rather than distinguishing between vocational or academic education is essential to preparing students for future society. Seven trends are influencing the future for adolescents preparing for the work world: (1) a shift from employment where manual labor, physical dexterity, and minimal education are needed for jobs where reading, writing, and calculating abilities are essential; (2) a baby bust; (3) employer reliance on an employee's ability to reason and communicate; (4) employers' desire for employees who can learn new skills rapidly, shift gears, and adapt and work under pressure; (5) changes in family patterns and income that have led people to seek out alternative approaches to full-time employment; (6) improved policies to attract and keep qualified employees; and (7) the need for successful workers to be computer literate, be able to solve problems, interact with others, or use extensive cognitive skills. Service learning, and particularly the roles students can play in providing support to each other, is an essential component of school-to-work transition programs. Nine specific roles peer helpers can play in service learning are mentors, tutors, climate builders, at-risk group members, career assistants, transition agent, dilemma manager, re-entry agent, and mediator. (Contains 35 references.) (YLB)

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Peer Helping: A Model for Service Learning

Rey Alexander Carr
Peer Resources

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Abstract

The author describes seven trends influencing the future for adolescents preparing for the work world. Focusing on student experience rather than distinguishing between vocational or academic education is reported as being essential to preparing students for future society. Service learning, and particularly the roles students can play in providing support to each other, is described as an essential component of school-to-work transition programs. Nine specific roles peer helpers can play in service learning and cautions regarding such peer programs are detailed. References to materials for establishing peer programs and training students to become peer service workers are provided.

We are experiencing a time of change unparalleled in history. The advances in technology, the growth of an international economy, improvements in health care, greater equality among races and gender, differences in life styles, changes in family organization, crime, war, nuclear threat, terrorism, the influence of government, the changes in moral standards and styles of young people, and our global communications systems are but a few of the changes which are occurring *within our lifetime*.

We all recognize that the work world is undergoing significant and rapid changes. The nature of work has changed considerably from the time we were in ninth grade. Yet many educators in our school system continue to support programs, including work study, career education, co-operative education or other vocational oriented programs as if the work world has remained static. Certainly the formats for how students get connected to the world of work have improved and some of the opportunities for involving students in work situations have increased, but basically students are being prepared for the world of work which existed in the past.

The purpose of this paper is to describe how students can be actively involved in preparing for their own futures by participating in service learning activities. Specifically this paper will describe trends that contribute to the rationale for service learning, advocate for a new relationship between vocational and academic preparation, and detail the roles students can play in helping themselves and their peers.

Envisioning the Future

When I was a kid, I had a liquid-filled, black globe that looked like a large eight ball. It was designed to predict the future. I would ask it a question such as will a particular girl go to a dance with me? (Hey, this is the kind

of future I wanted at the time!) I would shake the globe and then turn it so that an answer would float up to a little see-through panel in the globe. As I recall answers included predictions like, "only time will tell," or "you're on the right track," or my personal favorite, "ask again later."

While we may not be able to predict the future with any more precision than that eight ball, we can create a vision of the future in order to develop a plan for getting to the future. I've forgotten who said it, but a vision without a plan is a dream, and a plan without a vision is drudgery.

By examining present trends and understanding their implications, we can help students be better prepared not only for the work world but also for their personal worlds. Therefore, it is essential that school-to-work transition program developers understand what the future might bring in terms of careers and the work world. Here are seven changes which I have observed that should have a dramatic impact on how education prepares students for work:

1. There has been a major shift from employment where manual labor, physical dexterity and minimal education are needed to jobs where reading, writing and calculating abilities are essential. Computerization, robotics, and other technological advances have been partly responsible for this shift. Ability to gain jobs will rely more heavily on resumés or portfolios as well as presentation and interview skills. Educators must help all students record and document their accomplishments, personal skills, and strengths.

2. The baby boom has passed and baby bust is having an impact. Employers can no longer rely on skimming the top 25% of graduates; they now must rely on recruiting entry level workers from the bottom 25% as well. Employers will increase the pressure on

schools to help students learn basic skills. Employers will also become more actively involved in urging educational systems to be run more like the business world, and they will take a more supportive role in helping educational systems develop programs for students. Their attention may help to reduce continuing education barriers such as availability of day care for children of teenage parents.

3. Employers now rely more on an employee's ability to reason and communicate. Many jobs now require evaluation, monitoring, the ability to spot problems, trouble-shooting, decision-making skills and judgment as well as teamwork and group problem-solving. The ability to give and receive support is crucial in the workplace, yet in schools this kind of support is more often called cheating. More and more jobs will require care for and about other persons. Getting along with diverse groups and customers will play a significant role in employee performance appraisal.

4. Employers want employees who can learn new skills rapidly, be able to shift gears, be adaptable and work under pressure. The realities of mergers, plant shutdowns, bankruptcies, takeovers and competition with international production methods require that employees have time and stress management skills. Job security is no longer a major option offered by unions or management. A shift to service orientation and consumer satisfaction will mean career shifts, job changes, mobility, the growth of small non-

union companies, and greater entrepreneurial activities. Most importantly this shift means that virtually all employees regardless of their chosen field will need to be skilled in providing services.

5. Changes in family patterns and income have led people to seek out alternative approaches to full-time work. Part-time employment, flextime, the high tech home office, job sharing, dual income couples, multiple careers and early retirement have lessened the significance of work as a contributor to meaning in life. Persons are more likely to move in and out of the work force, to retrain or reeducate themselves for different careers. There will be a greater emphasis on taking risks to achieve personal dreams. The school-to-work transition will be better known as the school-to-work-to-school-to-work transition.

The seven observations influencing the future of the work world have been modified into a set of action principles for a Canadian-based career development program for youth known as ENGAGE (Centre for Career Development, 1994). ENGAGE is a program designed to help students analyze their strengths and take personal initiative in charting their career directions. Students participating in ENGAGE learn how to integrate the following action principles, also known as the "high five" into their career decision-making: 1) change is constant; 2) learning is ongoing; 3) focus on the journey; 4) follow your heart; and 5) access your allies.

6. Improved policies to attract and keep qualified employees such as benefit packages that include wellness promotion, retirement planning, physical fitness programs, employee assistance for substance abuse and other psychological, social or family problems and an increased emphasis on training and learning programs mean that employees will be involved in regard and respect for each other's welfare. While salaries will remain important, working climate, cooperative co-workers, being treated fairly and with respect will be the major determinants of loyalty to a workplace. To employees the work experience will be just as important as the outcomes of the work place.

7. To be successful at work, young people will likely be involved in at least one of the following four activities: they will be required to watch, create or monitor information displayed on computer screens, anticipate and act quickly regarding potential problems, listen to and interact with people as a primary part of their job, or use extensive cognitive skills.

Are Distinctions Between Vocational and Academic Tracks Needed?

The importance of these observations is that the changing nature of the work world means that the previous distinctions between academic and vocational programs are no longer valid. All students must be able to be sensitive to a job situation, analyze what is required, act on their analysis, use feedback to monitor their effectiveness, and adjust their actions accordingly. The future world of work will require considerable self-supervision, and there will be stronger emphasis on employment in well-designed jobs that provide opportunities for self-improvement, challenges and intrinsic rewards.

It is likely that two-thirds of all jobs created between now and the year 2000 will require a high school diploma. As will be shown later in this paper, students often leave school early in order to join the work world. Many school based vocational programs have been developed or supported for the deliberate purpose of being attractive to these students. However, these programs pay scant attention to the realities of the job market, the actual skills students need, and for the most part rely on teaching methods which are outdated and irrelevant to student needs. As I have stated previously with regards to work experience programs (Carr, 1985):

Experience was being used as a substitute for learning...Most programs operate as if the experience is an end in itself. That is, once a student has been placed in a work setting,

there are few opportunities for the student to discuss or reflect on what the student is actually learning about work, self, career and such. Students are learning something when they work, but without the opportunity for guided reflection, a focus on issues, feelings, thoughts, observations or meanings associated with work, the educative value of the work experience is severely restricted. (p. 30).

Students need more than just a "How's it going?" or brief discussion about work if they are going to learn to value learning from work. They need opportunities to:

- reveal misunderstandings and misconceptions, deepen understanding and increase learning retention and transfer;
- identify their attitudes and perceptions about work and how these effect their behaviour at work and recognize how work effects their values and thinking;
- construct and attach personal meaning to work experience;
- translate their thoughts, feelings and perceptions into appropriate action plans;
- experiment with new actions or behaviours and develop methods to gain understanding about their value; and
- recognize their strengths and weaknesses and what they can do about them.

Since many students with academic histories of grade failure, low academic self-image, inappropriate work habits necessary for career advancement, and minimal ability to identify and use existing resources find themselves in vocational oriented programs, it is crucial that such programs provide the types of learning opportunities described above. Without this type of learning for

students, it is likely that the same difficulties they experienced in school will resurface on the job. Vocational programs have an opportunity to play a transformational role by redesigning curriculum to deal with thinking skills, value questions, justice, equality, dignity, and human solidarity.

Service Learning

While the term service learning is relatively new, the concept has historical roots. Students acting as tutors, for example, have long been providing service to other students. Today's focus on service learning is primarily centered on helping students learn the skills, attitudes, and knowledge associated with providing service to others. The changing work world described in the previous section of this paper supports the new paradigm that every worker, regardless of the nature of employment, product, or responsibility will be a service provider. Modern organizational gurus warn organizations that to be successful in a global economy, they must redefine their purpose as one of providing service.

Students are already functioning as service providers. When adolescents experience worries, frustrations or dilemmas they are more likely to discuss them with their peers than with parents or other adults (Canadian Youth Foundation, 1985; Carr, 1984). Sometimes referred to as "peer pressure" this type of interactive service has benefits that are often missed because of the media attention to the negative aspects of peer pressure. Carr (1988), Tobler (1986) and Benard (1990), for example, found that peers were the key component in all effective substance abuse prevention programs, were essential to school dropout prevention (Carr, 1993), played a significant role in career choices (Carr, 1984), contributed to successful employee assistance programs (Grant, 1992), and provided needed support for displaced workers (Carr, 1993).

Peer programs have been established to reduce substance abuse by pregnant women and prevent FAS/FAE, to prevent unwanted pregnancy amongst adolescents, to prevent teen drinking and driving, to enhance physical fitness, and to reduce the risk of AIDS/HIV, STD, eating disorders, heart disease, chronic illness, and lung cancer (Richie, Stenroos, & Getty, 1990; Rose, 1992; Collins & Frey, 1992; Levinson, 1992; McGraw-Schuchman, 1994; Podschun, 1993; Weinrich, Weinrich, Stomborg, Boyd, & Weiss, 1993; Carr, in press; and Comstock, 1994). In addition peer programs have been established to promote non-violent conflict resolution (Schrumpf, Crawford, and Usadel, 1991; Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, & Burnett, 1992; and Benson & Benson, 1993).

Rather than viewing peers as providers of improper or inaccurate information, educators, health practitioners, and community program leaders have come to recognize the potential of peers in providing accurate information, promoting appropriate behaviours within their social system, and facilitating appropriate referrals to professionals. Most importantly peers have been recognized as playing an essential social support role for the maintenance of healthy behaviour, the reduction of harmful behaviour, and the prevention of relapse (Carr, 1984; Gottlieb, 1985; Tobler, 1986; Benard, 1988; Perry, 1992; Connolly, Geller, Marton & Kutcher, 1992; Hirsch & Dubois, 1992; Kirby, 1992; Spirito, Delawyer, & Stark, 1991; and Morritz & Seehafer, 1993).

The Peer Helping Strategy

In Canada peer programs have been established in virtually every school district. Most schools in Canada use peer helpers to deal with the difficult problems facing students today. Many of these programs use trained and supervised peers to prevent and reduce student substance abuse, educate students about sexuality and health issues, resolve

personal dilemmas, reduce suicide attempts, assist with career exploration and provide support for a variety of other significant social, educational and personal concerns.

Peer Roles

What roles are there for peers in a school to work transition program? Generally any role which increases the caring environment of the school, contributes to the growth of student self-worth, links what is relevant in a student's life to the curriculum of the school, and contributes to the acquisition of thinking skills. Here are some examples.

Peers Helpers as Mentors. Older students, trained as peer helpers, are assigned to work with younger or elementary school students. Special emphasis is placed on assisting younger students to express feelings about school life, learn appropriate social skills, develop decision-making abilities, and develop relationships with positive role models. This model can assist with early identification and intervention.

Peer Helpers as Tutors. Students in need of assistance in academic and social skills areas often gain more from working with peer tutors than with teachers. In addition the peer tutor gains from providing help. Tutors do not have to be students who excel in various subjects; they can be recruited from students who know how difficult it is to master certain subject matter areas.

Peer Helpers as Climate Builders. In this role trained peer helpers take an outreach approach, making contact with other students they do not know to offer assistance in situations or circumstances which indicate the student may or could be experiencing a dilemma or problem. The students are trained to recognize behaviours indicating trouble or concern and learn how to initiate and maintain friendly relationships with person not necessarily in their social group.

Peers as At-Risk Group Members. High school students at risk of dropping out are matched in a group setting with peer helpers. In this group the students are encouraged to discuss their individual situations. Opportunities are put in place to enable creative group problem-solving. Students take turns being the dilemma presenter while the rest of the group acts as a consulting team. The emphasis is on cooperation and mutual help.

Peers as Career Assistants. Students typically talk to each other about their aspirations, dreams, disappointments, and life experiences. Students trained in career discussion techniques can help their friends to consider their strengths, find ways to turn dreams into action plans, and locate resources to help them gain the experiences they need to fulfill their aspirations.

The Peer Helper as a Transition Agent. Peer helpers are assigned to students who are making a variety of transitions, such as new students to the school, students returning to school after a period of absence, students entering school from other countries, students changing grade levels, students going to work for the first time, or students experiencing traumatic or catastrophic events. The transition agent is often a person who has made the same transition, or comes from the same ethnic background or life experience.

The Peer Helper as Dilemma Manager. This role includes advertising and soliciting directly students who are associated with a specific dilemma such as "Considering Dropping Out of School?" These peer helpers encourage persons thinking about dropping out to discuss their concern with a dilemma manager, a person trained to help each person make the best possible decision given their circumstances, resources, feelings, attitudes and opportunities. The dilemma manager helps to sort out the options and the potential consequences. The peer helper acts like

a travel agent and asks other students, "Suppose you were thinking about leaving school prior to graduation? What would you need to know? What would you need from other people? If you wanted me to assist you in making this decision, what would I need to know about you? What characteristics or qualities would a person need in order for you to talk to that person about your dilemma? I'm ready to listen if you care to talk." The manager does not resolve the dilemma, but provides an opportunity for each student to fully explore the dilemma without worry of evaluation, judgment, coercion or intimidation. In this way students have a better chance of making the best use of resources, making the best decision under the circumstances and possibly developing a plan of action not previously considered when working by themselves on the dilemma.

The Peer Helper as Re-Entry Agent. In this role peer helpers interview and explore options with former students who are thinking about re-entering the school system. They extend a caring hand and share some of their own experiences about the tough and easy parts of returning to school. Most importantly they form a common experience connection to let returning students know they are not alone and they are supported in their struggle to come back.

The Peer Helper as Mediator. In this role peer helpers assist students to resolve conflicts, particularly with persons in authority roles in the school. Mediation is a mutual, win-win approach, focused on both students and

teachers getting their needs met. Students trained as mediators can help turn problem posers into problem solvers. Working as a mediator not only provides a job reality, but also enables students to learn alternative perspective-taking.

A peer focus can provide both the atmosphere and the tools needed to deal with everyday concerns and prevent these concerns from developing

into serious difficulties.

Peer programs provide opportunities for students to experience ownership of school resources. Effective peer programs, using the standards recommended by Carr, de Rosenroll and Saunders (1990), decrease student alienation and powerlessness. Peer programs contribute to the improvement of school climate, academic achievement, and personal problem-solving. Peer programs build on the strengths of students and provide opportunities for students

to value those strengths. Peer programs are a method to demonstrate care and concern. A school that cares about students will be a school that students care about.

Peer programs do have limitations. They are only one form of intervention, and must be part of an overall student service learning design. Peer program development requires professional training, and considerable dedication and commitment. A comprehensive service learning program must include a vision of the future, and in itself be an example of that future in its policies, practices and goals. A peer program is not a substitute for helping students deal with the serious social

PEER TRAINING RESOURCES

There are many excellent materials to help establish successful peer programs and train students as peer helpers. The most widely used Canadian resources are:

1. Carr, R. and Saunders, G. *The Peer Helper Training Guide*;
2. Carr, R. *The Theory and Practice of Peer Helping*;
3. Carr, R. *Peer Career Counsellors: A Practical Guide*;
4. Carr, R., deRosenroll, D. and Saunders, G. *Peer Helping: A Guide for Parents and Professionals*; and
5. deRosenroll, D., Saunders, G., and Carr, R. *The Mentor Strategy Program Development Resource Kit*.

All of these publications are available from Peer Resources (address on front page of this paper.)

circumstances in which they currently function. While peers may serve as a bridge or link to bring other students to professional help, they are not replacements for effective professional services.

As we enter the year 2000 era, helping students become service providers will increase as an area in need of great cooperation between all levels of government, business, industry and local communities. As Grey Owl (1991) has stated:

The future of our Great Nation is dependent on the education of all our people. The purpose of education is to provide youth with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to improve the quality of life and to have the tools to live meaningful lives. While we have an obligation to share with students what provides meaning in our own lives, we must not interfere with their opportunities to discover and create meaning in a life we have not experienced.

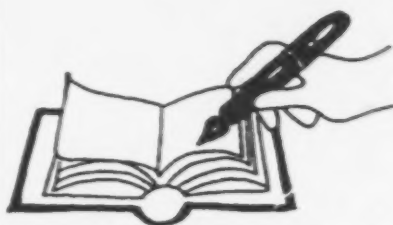
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Best Sellers

MATERIALS AVAILABLE FROM OUR BOOKSTORE



The Peer Counselling Starter Kit by Rey Carr and Greg Saunders. A comprehensive training manual for teen and adult peer training programs: \$32.95.

Co-Conseil: Développé par le Projet du Co-Conseil by Rey Carr and Greg Saunders. This is the French version of the *Peer Counselling Starter Kit*: \$32.95.

The Mentor Program Development Resource Kit by David de Rosenroll, Greg Saunders and Rey Carr. Theory, practical tips and training workshop activities for mentor programs: \$49.95.

Trousse documentaire d'élaboration du programme de mentorat. The French version of the *The Mentor Program Development Resource Kit*: \$49.95.

Peer Counsellor's Workbook. A student workbook which includes activities, poems and areas for note-taking. Written by Gail Roberts to accompany the *Kit*: \$7.95.

Kids Helping Kids. A peer counselling manual for elementary and middle schools by Dr. Trevor Cole: \$22.00.

Peer Counselling: Helping Seniors Help Seniors: The Program Guide. A training manual by Dr. Honoré France for seniors citizen peer programs: \$9.95.

Peer Counselling: Helping Seniors Help Seniors: The Workbook. A senior peer counsellor's workbook to accompany the program guide: \$5.95.

Peer Career Counsellors: A Conceptual and Practical Guide. A detailed rationale and plan written by Rey Carr to help students help each other in career awareness and development: \$12.00.

Le Counselling par les pairs: Concepts et aspects pratiques by Rey Carr. This is the French translation of *Peer Career Counsellors*: \$12.00.

The Theory and Practice of Peer Counselling by Rey Carr. An outline of the rationale and basis for peer work: \$3.50.

The Peer Helping Strategy for Dropout Prevention by Rey Carr. Describes the employment needs of youth, analyzes dropout research, proposes new age 3R's, and details roles for peers: \$4.50.

Peer Helping: An Information Booklet for Parents and Professional Helpers by Rey Carr, David de Rosenroll and Greg Saunders. Based on questions most asked by parents, this booklet provides practical information on all program issues. Also contains a peer standards checklist: \$4.95.

Peer Helping Implementation Maintenance and Research Issues by David de Rosenroll. A resource book for trainers and researchers: \$13.50.

Peer Teaching and Tutoring: An Indexed and Annotated Bibliography. A 900+ entry work, cross-referenced and indexed for easy access: \$12.00.

Peer Helping: Indexed and Annotated Bibliography. An extensive work of all articles, books and resources on peer helping: Updated to 1993: \$15.00.

A Peer Counselling Program Evaluation for a Secondary School written by Ailsa Edge and provides details and forms for evaluating school-based programs: \$4.75.

Peer Helping: The Bridge to Substance Abuse Prevention. How peer helping is used to prevent substance abuse among teens and a list of the ingredients of a prevention curriculum; written by Rey Carr: \$4.25.

The City-Wide Peer Counselling Program by Rey Carr. An article reprint describing peer helping roles and how several schools in Victoria combine their training programs: \$6.00.

Helping Ourselves: Organizing a Peer Support Centre. Suitable for colleges and universities only. No cost, and orders should be made on post-secondary institution letterhead.

S'aider soi-même: L'organisation d'un centre d'entraide pour étudiants. This is the French version of *Helping Ourselves*. No cost, and orders should be made on post-secondary letterhead.

Training Certificates. A certificate to provide recognition for involvement in peer helping programs: \$1.00 each.

Peer Helping Guide for a Native Community. Ron Jorgenson describes how to implement peer programs in First Nation communities: \$2.95.

Peer Helping Posters. A set of posters suitable for recruiting students at the elementary thru high school level: \$5.00 for set of three. (Poster samples appear throughout this issue of the Journal, and each poster is 43cm x 57cm.)

Peer Helping: Information for Parents (brochure). These pamphlets describe roles, standards, and rationale for peer helping. They can be personalized for individual programs. No cost, and can be ordered in quantity (order must be on organization letterhead.)

The Peer Counsellor Journal. Canada's major source of information on peer helping. Subscriptions are available at no cost to persons who agree to complete periodic surveys.

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